

*C. H. N. at the F. B. Saulson*

JOHN BROWN  
AND HIS FRIENDS

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1905

## JOHN BROWN AND HIS FRIENDS.

By F. B. Sanborn.

I have noticed, in looking back upon my three and seventy years, what others must have observed,—how one marked event in early life leads to another marked event, and that to a third, and so on; as if by a chain of sequences arranged beforehand upon a scheme of life. It is this no doubt which has led so many men to view their careers as something foreordained,—a map shown of their destinies, which pointed out the way they were to go; not compelling them to a given course, but indicating that as the line of least resistance. It was through the fact that my fathers had been parishioners of Parson Abbot, and the acquaintance had been kept up between the families, that I became the lover of Ariana Walker. It was she who determined my college education; it was our mutual interest for the oppressed that made me active in the cause of social and political freedom; and it was her brother George, a year or two after her death, who sent John Brown of Kansas to me with a letter of introduction, late in the year 1856. Six years later it was this same brother-in-law, then in the state government of Massachusetts (when the John Brown episode had been closed by the emancipation proclamation of Abraham Lincoln, and the victory at Gettysburg), who suggested to me an appointment on the newly-created Board of State Charities, in 1863, which has largely shaped the course

of my public life for forty years. And it was through the acquaintance formed with his circle at Springfield, from 1853 to 1865, which led to my selection by his intimate friend, Samuel Bowles, as one of the editors of the *Springfield Republican*,—then and since one of the most influential journals in the United States, whose staff I had joined in 1856, as a correspondent, and of which I became an editor in 1868.

I cannot believe, therefore, that our human lives are subject to blind chance, or fortuitously directed by accident. Too many incidents in my own career, and those of my associates, have shown me a more intelligent directing power, aside from the individual human will; what it is, in direct activity, I have not too curiously inquired. But I have followed its intimations when they were clearly revealed, and have found my little bark steered by a hand wiser than my own.

This is one aspect of that philosophy to which mere accident may have given, in America, the name of "Transcendental," and of which my long-time friends, Alcott and Emerson, were the best representatives—unless it might be some simple-hearted Quakeress, illumined by the Inner Light. John Brown, that descendant of *Mayflower* Pilgrims, held this faith also, and it led him into those dark, heroic ways whose issue was the forcible destruction of negro slavery, and

his own immortality of fame, as one of the two grand martyrs of that cause,—Abraham Lincoln being the other. I have met many men and women of eminent character, and of various genius and talents, among whom Brown stands by himself,—an occasion for dispute and blame as well as for an apotheosis of unselfish heroism,—but a man not to be passed over without comment by those who read or hear the story of our times.

At my graduation from Harvard in July, 1855, the slavery question had assumed a very alarming aspect. The slaveholding oligarchy who had ruled the land for a quarter-century, but whose policy had been threatened by the Missouri Compromise and the unexpected result of the Mexican War, had boldly repealed that Compromise, and entered upon a course intended to make negro slavery a national and no longer a sectional evil. Against this violation of a compact supposed to be final, the whole North had risen up in wrath, and the administration of a New Hampshire president was deserted by his own state. He still adhered to the rash policy of Jefferson Davis and Caleb Cushing, then in his cabinet, and allowed the oligarchy to introduce their slave system from Missouri into the just organized territory of Kansas. The freemen of New England, Ohio and the Northwest set out at once to thwart this mischievous attempt, by colonizing Kansas with free laborers, owning their own farms, and tilling them with their own hands, or with labor honestly paid for. From the first I had taken an active interest in this conflict between freedom and chattel slavery; had voted steadily in New Hampshire against President

Pierce's party (including my grandfather and his nephew Norris), and in support of Hale, the bold and popular Independent Democrat. Voting for the first time in Massachusetts, I joined the party of Charles Sumner and his friends, and shared their indignation at the brutal attack made on our senator by Brooks of South Carolina. Almost at the same point of time, the Missouri slaveholders, passively supported by Pierce and Jefferson Davis, had destroyed by violence the rising town of Lawrence (May, 1856), and kindled civil war in Kansas by their outrages. The people of Massachusetts, by a large majority, were supporters of the Free State cause in Kansas, and were also earnest in assisting their own young men who had gone to settle in that territory. Consequently, soon after the attack on Lawrence I assisted in raising a large subscription in aid of Kansas, and became secretary, first of the Concord town committee, then of a Middlesex county committee, and finally, before 1856 closed, of State Kansas Committee, of which my friend George Stearns was chairman, and Dr. S. G. Howe, Dr. Samuel Cabot and the late Judge Russell of Plymouth were active members. Of the county committee John Nesmith, afterwards lieutenant-governor, was chairman, and C. C. Esty, afterwards member of Congress, Charles Hammond, a distinguished teacher, and James Jennison, a Harvard tutor, were members, with others. During my absence in Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska, in August, 1856, my neighbor, John S. Keyes (later sheriff and judge of a local court), acted as secretary, for a single meeting, of the county committee,

Boston, Aug. 18<sup>th</sup> 1855.

The Committee met at the N. E. Fair Rooms.  
 the Chairman J. Wadsworth Esq. presiding, present  
 Messrs Lock, Esq., Hammond, & the Secy for the  
 Boston, that \$300.00 be appropriated to the  
 purchase of stock in the Emigrant Aid Co.  
 That \$400.00 be appropriated to the Rev.  
 J. W. Higginson to send six men to Kansas  
 some of them being from Middlesex Co.  
 voted that \$300.00 be appropriated  
 to the National Kansas Committee  
 at Chicago. & that the Secy for the  
 notify the Treasr of the N. K. Com.  
 to draw on the Treasr of this Committee  
 for this amount of \$300.00  
 Adjourned for a fortnight from  
 to day.

Attest  
 John S. Hayes  
 Secy for the

and his record is worth citing in fac simile:

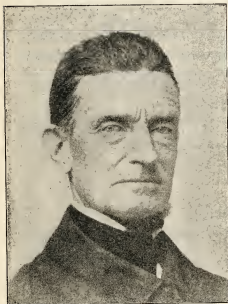
This county committee took measures to canvass all Middlesex for funds, and I spent the first half of my summer vacation (I had gone to Concord in March, 1855, before graduating, to teach the children of Emerson, Judge Hoar and their friends) in driving over half the county in a chaise to organize town committees and raise money. The effect of this was that in February, 1857, when I reported the financial results of our work, we had raised \$17,383 in money and supplies from a population of

195,000 then living in Middlesex. Of this sum, Concord had given \$2,242, from a population of 2,251. The money raised had been turned over mainly to the state committee of Stearns, Howe and Cabot,—\$4,677 going to them directly from the givers, and \$5,550 by vote of the Middlesex committee. But \$1,100 was voted to the national committee at Chicago, \$900 to Colonel Higginson, who led a party of free state men into Kansas, \$300 to the Emigrant Aid Company, and something like \$225 to lecturers at public meetings, for their service and expenses. The clothing and

other supplies were turned over either to the Emigrant Aid Company or the state committee, to be forwarded. Besides giving \$100 in the Concord subscription (as did Judge Hoar, his venerable father, and J. S. Keyes) I had visited Chicago, Iowa and Nebraska City in August, at my own expense, to see that the way for emigrants through Iowa and Nebraska was open, and to confer with Messrs.

returned home early in September, 1856.

In October I arranged with the State Kansas Committee to become their corresponding secretary, and for the winter sessions of my school employed a student in Harvard to take my place while I kept the office of the committee in Niles's Block on School Street, Boston. There, early in January, 1857, Brown called on me one morning, bringing a letter of introduction from my brother Walker, who had been chairman of a Kansas committee for Hampden county, but who had known Brown intimately as a wool merchant in Springfield ten years before. I introduced Brown to Dr. Howe and Theodore Parker, to various public audiences, and to a legislative committee of Massachusetts in the state house. The first draft of Brown's speech, in answer to the questions of the legislators, is in my hands, as follows, in part: (See next page.)



John Brown in 1857

Dole, Harvey Hurd and Captain Webster (a New Hampshire officer, afterwards General Webster of Grant's staff), of the National Committee, and with young Horace White, their secretary. The ending of my vacation would not let me go through to Lawrence; nor did I meet John Brown on his visit to southwestern Iowa early in August, nor again in early October. He had gone back to southern Kansas before I reached Iowa in August, and I had

I have found here and there a person, in my wanderings over two continents, who did not believe freedom was a good thing for others; but I never happened to meet one who did not think it an excellent thing for himself. Persons naturally slavish I have seen, as old Aristotle had; but even they, in their hearts, chose freedom, while in act they submitted to bondage. If by chance they had escaped, they would have said to any one who asked, as the fugitive in Canada was asked, "Why did you run away from a good home, where you had plenty to eat and wear, a kind master and not much to do?" "Why, Boss, dat sitiuation is open right now, if you wants to go and apply for it." In short, freedom is

I propose to confine my statements to such facts alone; as I have a personal knowledge of; & to the truth of which I mean to make oath. } Page 1<sup>st</sup>

I saw while in Missouri in the Fall of 1855 large numbers going to Kansas to vote; & also returning after they had so done as they said

we were called out & I with four of my sons, traveled mostly on foot & during the night to help defend Lawrence a distance of 35 Miles where we were detained with some 500 <sup>others</sup> on horseback from 5 to 18 days say on average of 10 days at a cost to each of not less than \$150 per day as regards to say nothing of the actual loss; & suffering occasioned by many of them leaving their families sick, their crops not secured, their houses unprepared for winter & many without houses at all. This was the case with myself & sons who could get houses built after returning. These alone would amount to \$7500. Loss & suffering cannot be estimated.

I saw at that time the body of the murdered Barber; & was present to see his wife, & other friends brought in to see him with his clothes on; just as he was when killed.

I went in the Spring of last year with some of my sons amongst the Oxford men on the Orange river; in the character of a Surveyor, & heard them tell what they had come for. This detained us from our work

From about the 20<sup>th</sup> of May hundreds of men like ourselves lost their whole time, & entirely failed of securing any kind of crop whatever. I believe it safe to say that 500 Free State men lost each 120 days at \$150 per day which would be to say nothing of abandon & losses \$30000, dollars in both estimates

On or about the 30<sup>th</sup> May two of my sons <sup>with several others</sup> were imprisoned without other crime than opposition to Proser Legislation; & most barbarously treated for a time { One being held about one Month; the other about four Months. Both had their families <sup>in Kansas</sup> <sup>very taken</sup> on the ground. After ~~that~~ both of them were burned out, in which burning all the Eight suffered; & one had his Oxen taken away. There is the Charge <sup>own to their</sup>

which one of them wore after the anxiety, sufferings, & cruelty Page 3<sup>d</sup> he experienced had rendered him a Maniac; see a Maniac.

the natural desire of mankind,—even where servitude is their natural condition. And I belong to a small and fast dwindling band of men and women, who fifty, sixty and seventy years ago resolved that all other persons ought to be as free as ourselves.

Many of this band made sacrifices for the cause of freedom,—the freedom of others, not their own. Some sacrificed their fortunes and their lives. One man, rising above the rest by a whole head, gave his life, his small fortune, his children, his reputation—all that was naturally dear to him—under conditions which have kept him in memory, although other victims are forgotten or but dimly remembered. John Brown fastened the gaze of the whole world upon his acts and his fate; the speeding years have not lessened the interest of mankind in his life and death; and each succeeding generation inquires what sort of man he truly was. The time is coming—and has already arrived in some regions—when Brown will be regarded as a mythical personage, incarnating some truth or some desire dear to the human race, but not a flesh-and-blood man at all. His career had elements of romance and improbability, such as make us doubt the actual existence of legendary heroes, like Hercules, Samson, Arthur, Roland and the Spanish Cid. But he was a very real and actual person—only a peculiar and remarkable one, like Joan of Arc—one of those who appear from time to time, to verify the saying, “Man alone can perform the impossible.” What more impossible than that a village-girl of France should lead the king’s armies to victory?—unless it were that a sheep-farmer and wool-merchant of Ohio

should foreshow and rehearse the forcible emancipation of four millions of American slaves.

Historians have not dealt very sagely with this typical character. They have looked at him through the wrong end of the telescope, with colored lenses and ill-adjusted focus; they have not seen that he was one of those rare types, easily passing into the mythical, to which belonged David, the shepherd, Tell, the mountaineer, Wallace, the outlaw, and Hofer, the Tyrolese innkeeper. Born of the people, humble of rank and obscure in early life, these men (if men they all were) drew towards them the wrath of the powerful, the love of the multitude; they were hunted, prisoned, murdered,—but every blow struck at them only made them dearer to the heart of the humble. By these, and not by coteries of scholars in their libraries, the fame of heroes is established. In heroes, faults are pardoned, crimes forgotten, exploits magnified,—their life becomes a poem or a scripture,—they enter that enviable earthly mortality which belongs to the story of a race, and can never be left out of literature.

I first met John Brown, a little less than fifty years ago, when he was not quite 57 years old; my acquaintance with him continued hardly three years; yet I seem to have known him better, and to have seen him oftener than those who have journeyed beside me in life’s path for sixty years. My actual intercourse with him hardly exceeded a month; my correspondence was some two and a half years (from February, 1857, to September, 1859), and that infrequent; yet the momentous events in which he had a share give to that brief intercourse



the duration of a lifetime. Nay, Thoreau was literally as well as figuratively right when he ascribed to Brown a practical immortality: "Of all the men who were said to be my contemporaries, it seems to me that John Brown is the only one who has not died. I meet him at every turn. He is more alive than ever he was. He is no longer working in secret. He works in public, and in the clearest light that shines on this land."

It is true that Brown worked in secret all the time that I knew him, yet he had no aims but public ones; and nothing which he did needs now to be concealed. Men are not yet agreed that all he did was perfectly right; it would be strange if they had been; but there is a general agreement that he was himself right, as Governor Andrews said on a memorable occasion. He knew the inward cancer that was feeding on this republic; he pointed to the knife and the cautery that must extirpate it; he even had the force and nerve to make the first incision.

Lord Rosebery, speaking of certain national junctures, said, "What is then wanted is not treasures, nor fleets, nor legions, but a *man*,—the man of the moment, the man of destiny." "In such men," he added, with Wallace chiefly in mind, "there is, besides their talents, their spirit, their character, that magnetic fluid which enables them to influence vast bodies of their fellow-men, and makes them a binding and stimulating power outside the circle of their own fascination." This character Brown had, and it grew out of his courage, his self-sacrifice and his implicit faith in God. These traits cannot long be simulated; nor is it easy to disguise

selfishness in a mask of generosity. The less courage, the more self-love men have, the more easily do they recognize the opposites, sometimes only to hate and belittle them; but the mass of men, and nearly all women, finally or speedily admire, and then worship. There was wisdom, as well as bitter wit, in a reply of Talleyrand to some French inventor of a new religion, who asked him how it could best be propagated. "Nothing easier; get yourself crucified for it."

It was a religion by no means new which inspired Brown. Early in my acquaintance with him he said, "I believe in the Golden Rule and the Declaration of Independence; to me they both mean the same thing. It would be better that a whole generation—men, women and children—should pass away by a violent death, than that one jot of either should fail *in this country*."

It may be asked if from the first the greatness of Brown's nature was to be recognized. It is not given young men to know all things—though they are mercifully kept from seeing this; but there is a certain divining quality in youth which lets it behold more in simple men than the hardened veteran can discern. From our first meeting it was clear to me that Brown was no common man; his face, his walk, his whole bearing proclaimed it. Like Cromwell, whom in certain traits he much resembled, he had cleared his mind of cant; the hollow formulas of scholars, priests and politicians had no force with him. He had a purpose; knew what it was, and meant to achieve it. Who shall say that he did not? The emancipation of our slaves could not be the



work of any one man, or of a million men; it was finally wrought by Lincoln with a stroke of his pen; but even then it cost thousands of lives and the patient work of years to confirm what Lincoln had written. John Brown convinced the leaders of opinion on both sides that slavery must die or the nation could not live; and that was the first long step towards our emancipation.

He came to me as mentioned, with a note of introduction from George Walker of Springfield—both of us being Kansas committee-men, working to maintain the freedom of that territory, and Brown had been one of the fighting men there in the summer of 1856, just before. His theory required fighting in Kansas; it was the only sure way, he thought, to keep that region free from the curse of slavery. His mission now was to levy war on it, and for that to raise and equip a company of a hundred well-armed men who should resist aggression in Kansas, or occasionally carry the war into Missouri. Behind that purpose, but not yet disclosed, was his intention to use the men thus put into the field for incursions into Virginia or other slave states. Our State Kansas Committee, of which I was secretary, had a stock of arms that Brown wished to use for this company, and these we voted to him. They had been put in the custody of the National Committee at Chicago, and it was needful to follow up our vote by similar action in the National Committee. For this purpose I was sent to a meeting of that committee at the Astor House, in New York, as the proxy of Dr. Howe and Dr. Samuel Cabot—both members of the National Committee. I met Brown

there, and aided him in obtaining from the meeting an appropriation of \$5,000 for his work in Kansas, of which, however, he only received \$500. The committee also voted to restore the custody of two hundred rifles to the Massachusetts committee which had bought them; well knowing that we should turn them over to John Brown, as we did. He found them at Tabor, Iowa, in the following September, and took possession; it was with a part of these rifles that he entered Virginia two years later.

At this Astor House meeting Brown was closely questioned by some of the National Committee, particularly by Mr. Hurd of Chicago, as to what he would do with money and arms. He refused to pledge himself to use them solely in Kansas, and declared that his past record ought to be a sufficient guarantee that he should employ them judiciously. If we chose to trust him, well and good, but he would neither make pledges nor disclose his plans. Mr. Hurd had some inkling that Brown would not confine his warfare to Kansas, but the rest of us were willing to trust Brown, and the money was voted.

In the following February—the Astor House meeting was Jan. 23 and 24, 1857—I introduced Brown before a committee of the Massachusetts Legislature, where he made the speech just quoted in aid of a state appropriation by Massachusetts to protect the Free-State settlers who had gone from that state to Kansas. Such an appropriation had been voted in Vermont; and we also came near carrying one; it was finally voted down. Brown spoke forcibly, reading much from the paper above cited, describing the losses inflicted in Kansas on

the free-state men. He afterwards spoke at a public meeting in Concord, and in course of the winter at Worcester also, and in other places. Late in March I met him again in New York, and we went together to Easton in Pennsylvania, where ex-Governor Reeder of Kansas was living, to persuade him to return to Kansas, and become the head of our Free-State party there in the spring of 1857.

Shortly before this journey Brown had visited me in the house of Ellery Channing, at Concord, where I had been living with my sister for two years; it stood opposite the house of Henry Thoreau's father and mother, with whom he was then living, and where he died five years later. It was on Friday that he came up from Boston, and at noon we went across the street to dine with the Thoreau family. All Concord had heard of Brown's fights and escapes in Kansas the summer before, and Thoreau wished to meet him. As I had engagements in the afternoon, I left Brown talking with Thoreau, who easily saw what manner of man he was, and to whom he narrated in detail his most noted fight in Kansas—the Black Jack engagement, where, with nine men, he captured twenty-two men under Captain Pate. While they sat conversing, in the early afternoon, Emerson, who lived at the other (eastern) end of the village, came up to call on Thoreau, and was there introduced to Brown. From this day's conversation, and what followed the next night, which Brown spent as Emerson's guest, came that intimate acquaintance with Brown's character and general purposes which enabled Thoreau and Emerson in 1859 to make those addresses in praise of him

that did so much to turn the tide of sentiment in his favor, after his capture at Harper's Ferry. But to neither of them, nor to me at that time, did he open his Virginian plans; and he would never unfold them fully to Wendell Phillips, much as they valued each other. The reason he gave me, a year later, for this reticence with Phillips, was noteworthy. He had charged me to make his plan known to Theodore Parker, Dr. Howe and Col. Higginson, on my return from Gerrit Smith's house in Peterboro, N. Y., where he had communicated it to me, after making Mr. and Mrs. Smith acquainted with it. I asked him if I should mention it to Mr. George Stearns or to Mr. Phillips. He replied that he would himself talk with Mr. Stearns when he saw him; as for Mr. Phillips, "I have noticed," said Brown, "that men who have the gift of eloquence, as our friend has it, seldom are men of action; now it is men of action I wish to consult; and so you need say nothing to Wendell Phillips."

On the Sunday morning following this interview between Brown, Thoreau and Emerson, I called in a chaise at Emerson's house, where Brown had breakfasted, and drove with him across the country from Concord to Medford to visit Mr. Stearns, who then and afterwards was one of his most devoted and efficient friends. As we went along through Lexington and West Medford, talking of his campaigns in Kansas, and of his visits to European battlefields in 1849, Brown directed my attention to places similar to those he had chosen for encampment or fortification on the prairies; alleging that it was not the strongest positions that are usually

taken on hilltops, but that a ravine, well guarded on the flanks, was often a better military post. This was strange doctrine to me, and I reminded him of the clansman's remark in "Waverley,"—"Even a haggis (God bless her!) can charge down hill;" but he maintained his opinion. He told me of the battlefields he had seen in Europe, Waterloo among them, and criticised the Austrian and French soldiers, whose reviews he had seen, saying (what the sequel soon verified) that the Austrians, with all their drill and precision, would be beaten by armies that moved more rapidly. His mind was then much occupied with plans of warfare, defensive and aggressive; but he did not fail to note all common things which passed under his eagle's eye. His habit of reflection and comparison was inborn and long cultivated. His conversation was modest but singularly instructive; his manner was grave and diffident, yet full of respect and consideration.

I have often heard and seen it said that Brown was unbalanced in mind—even insane. At the age of twenty-five I had no great personal experience with insane persons, but since 1863 I have seen and talked with many thousands in many states and countries, in different phases of insanity. Looking back I see clearly what I then felt instinctively, that no man had more fully the control of his own mind than Brown. Not the least of the many indications by which I can now recognize even slight aberrations of mind, were visible in him; firmness and steadiness of soul, under the guidance of an inflexible will, but one in humble submission to a foreseeing, just and benign Divine will—these were conspicuous traits. From what

is called ordinary prudence he was not exempt; but he had in full measure that higher, extraordinary prudence which teaches the superior man how to live and when to die, for accomplishing a grand purpose. This higher prudence overrides the lower, as the higher law, at which Webster scoffed, overrules ordinary statutes; and Brown was the greatest example the nineteenth century saw of Emerson's lofty maxim—

Though Love repine—and Reason chafe,  
There comes a voice without reply—  
"Tis man's perdition to be safe  
When for the truth he ought to die."

In the conversations of Brown at Concord his ultimate plans were not revealed, but his spirit and character were fully seen. A casual glance, a frivolous mind might be deceived in John Brown; his homely garb and plain manners did not betoken greatness, but neither could they disguise it from penetrating eyes. That antique and magnanimous character which afterwards, amid wounds and fetters and ferocious insults, suddenly fastened the gaze of the whole world; those words of startling simplicity then uttered among the corpses of his men and the ruin of his desperate enterprise, before his partial judges, or in his prison cell—all things that were peculiar to this man, and distinguished him among the multitude—lost nothing of their force when he was seen at nearer view, and heard within the walls of a library. His impressive personality, whose echoes so long filled the air of our armed camps, and are still heard in strains of martial music, lacked nothing of its effect on the few who came within his influence before the world recognized him.

He first unfolded his extreme plans for attacking slavery in Virginia, on the evening of Washington's birthday, 1858, in an upper chamber of Gerrit Smith's villa at Peterboro, where, amid his inherited acres which he managed with noble generosity, that baronial democrat lived and bore his part in our struggle for liberty. I mean, he unfolded them to me and my college classmate, Edwin Morton of Plymouth; for he had already opened them to Mr. and Mrs. Smith, in more private conversations, and they had signified a general approval. Now he read us the singular constitution recently drawn up by him (in Frederick Douglass' house at Rochester), for the government of the territory, small or large, which he might rescue by force from the curse of slavery, and for the control of his own little band. It was an amazing proposition—desperate in its character, wholly inadequate in its provision of means, and of very uncertain result. Such as it was, Brown had set his heart on it; he looked upon it as the shortest way to restore our slave-cursed republic to the principles of the Declaration of Independence; and he was ready to die in its execution—as he did.

We dissuaded him from what we thought certain failure; urging all the objections that would naturally occur to persons desiring the end he was seeking, but distrusting the slender means and the unpropitious time. But no argument could prevail against his fixed purpose; he was determined to make the attempt, with many or with few, and he left us only the alternatives of betrayal, desertion or support. We chose the last, but more from a high

regard for the man than with much hope of success.

The results of our support and of Brown's action in Virginia are well known of all men. He struck at American slavery the severest blow it had ever received; and his tragic experiment, though for a few months it seemed to have failed, was a great hastening cause of that bloody rebellion in which slavery perished. Brown was executed December 2, 1859; three years and thirty days afterward, President Lincoln issued the final decree of emancipation; and in six years from the date of Brown's death, not a slave remained in bondage, of the four millions for whose redemption he had died. Seldom in human history have such great results so rapidly followed magnanimous deeds. Without claiming for Brown more than he modestly claimed for himself, I have always said he was an instrument in the hands of Providence, to uproot and destroy an evil institution; which had never appeared more boastful, more flourishing or more permanent than when, only eight years before final emancipation, Brown entered the broad domain of Kansas, which the slaveholders, by force and fraud, were holding as their own. I had aided, in a small way, to establish freedom in Kansas; and I assisted, to the extent of my power, the desperate undertaking of Brown against slavery in the entire South. Others contended against the monstrous mischief in other ways, and it is impossible to estimate the exact share which Garrison, Phillips, Parker, Mrs. Stowe and the anti-slavery champions in general had in the final victory. But we may well say that to none except John Brown and Abraham Lincoln

was it granted to make the initial and the final attack on the very seat of slavery's power, and to die in the hour of victory, winning the double glory of champions and of martyrs. That contest is long since over: our country is free from chattel slavery, and only a few embittered or fantastical persons now regret its disappearance. Here and there a college professor, a belated editor or some

walking ghost of 50 years ago, rises up to defend—not slavery itself but some of its accessories. In doing this they naturally turn aside to belittle and abuse the memory of John Brown. Ineffective must all their malice and misprision be; his place is taken, once for all, among immortal names. What he thought of himself five days before his death may be read on the next two pages:

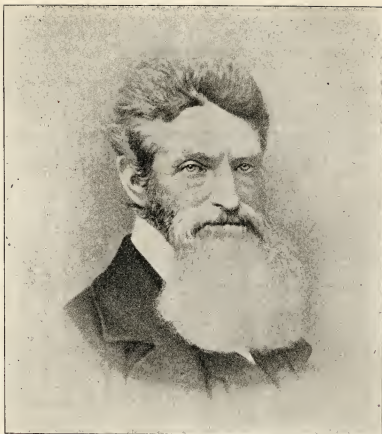
Charlestown, Jefferson Co, Va, 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 1857. Sabbath  
My deeply beloved Sisters Mary A., & Martha.

I am obliged to occupy a part of what is probably (my last) Sabbath on Earth in answering the very kind & very comforting letters of Sister Wend & Son of the 2. I wish for I must fail to do so at all. I do not think it any violation of the day that God made for men. Nothing could be more grateful to my feelings than to learn that you do not feel unadvisedly modified & even disgraced on account of your relation to one who is to die on the scaffold. I have really suffered by ten fold since my confinement here; on account of what I feared would be the terrible feelings of my kindred on my account than from all other causes. I am most glad to learn from you that my friends on your own account were ill founded. I was afraid that a little seeming present prosperity might have carried you away from realities & that the honor that comes from men might lead you in some measure to undervalue that which cometh from God. I bless God who has most abundantly supported & comforted me: all along to find you not unmoved. Dr. Henry Humphrey has just sent a most helpful lamentation over my infatuation & madness (very kindly expressed) in which I cannot doubt he has given expression to the common grief of others of our kindred. I have endeavored to answer him kindly also: & at the same time to deal faithfully with my old friend. I think I will send you his letter: & if you deem it worth the trouble you can probably get my reply or a copy of it. I suppose it for me to say None of these things move me. I have experienced a consolation: those which I fear he had not yet known. Sister Humphrey wrote me a very comforting letter—these are things dear Sisters that God hides even from the wise & prudent. I feel astonished that one so exceedingly

will, & unworthy as I am, would even be supposed to have a place any here  
on any where amongst the very best of All, who when they come to die (for  
 all must) were permitted to pay the debt of nature in defence of the  
 right, & of God's eternal & immutable truth. Oh my dear friends can  
 you believe it possible that the scaffold has not room for your some  
 poor, old unworthy brother? I think God through Jesus Christ my  
 Lord's it is even so I am now shedding tears: but they are no longer  
 tears of grief or sorrow I trust I have merely done with them. I am  
 weeping for joy: & gratitude that I can in no other way express.  
 I get many very kind & comforting letters that I cannot possibly reply to.  
 With I had time & strength to answer all, I am obliged to ask those  
 to whom I do write to let friends read, what I send as much as they  
 will con. So write my deeply afflicted Wife; He will greatly com-  
 fort her to have you write her dearly. She has borne up manfully un-  
 der accumulated trials. She will be most glad to know that  
 that has not been entirely forgotten by relatives and try to all my  
 friends that I am wasting invaluable & precious the days of my ap-  
 pointed time: fully believing that for me now to live will be to me on  
 infinite gain; & of untold benefit to the cause we love.  
 Therefore be of good cheer & let not your hearts be troubled.  
 "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me; on my throne  
 even as I also overcame; & am sit down with my Father on his throne  
 I wish my friends could know but a little of the some opportunities  
 I now get for kind & faithful labour in God's cause. I hope  
 none has been entirely lost. Now dear friends, I have done  
 "May the God of peace bring us all again from the dead"  
 Your Affectionate Brother  
 John Brown

In my "Life and Letters of John Brown" (Boston, 1885) and in my memoir of Dr. Howe (New York, 1891) I have narrated quite fully my connection with Brown's enterprises, and given my estimate of his character. In a recent number of the *Critic* magazine I have shown the relation of Gerrit Smith to the foray in Virginia; and in the forthcoming biography of Major Stearns by his son, F. P. Stearns, my former pupil, his father's connection with Brown

will be fully explained. Col. Higginson has yet to publish his final account of his own relation to the conflict in Kansas and its strange sequel at Harper's Ferry and Charlestown. The estimate made of Brown by Emerson and Thoreau has been widely read, and I have quoted some passages from Bronson Alcott on the subject. But he showed me, forty years ago, other entries in his diary which preserve interesting facts as well as opinions.



John Brown in 1859.

*From Alcott's Diary of 1859.*

*Tuesday, Oct. 25.* More about Captain Brown in today's papers; the trial at Charlestown, Va., and its incidents. I am pleased to read that his friends here are obtaining good counsel for his defence, if the trial can be conducted with any fairness in that slave state. But an unbiased jury, a righteous judge cannot be got there, and he must take the extreme penalties, we are sure.

*Oct. 26, Evening.* See Sanborn at Emerson's house; he has come home from looking into Capt. Brown's affairs. He was Brown's friend and entertained him here last May, as well as on a former visit in 1857. Ellery Channing is at Emerson's also, and we discuss the matter at length, I defending the deed, under the circumstances, and the *Man*. His rescue would be difficult, even if he would consent to be taken. And the spectacle of a martyrdom such as his must needs be, will be of greater service to the

country, and to the coming in of a righteous rule than years of agitation by the Press, or the voices of partisans, North and South. 'Twas a bold stroke, this of his, for justice universal, and it damages all (political) parties beyond repair. Even the Republicans must in some sense claim him as theirs in self defence, and to justify Republicanism in the people's eyes as freedom's defender.

*Wednesday, 9th November.* Thoreau calls on me at the Orchard House. He thinks some one from the North should see Gov. Wise, or write concerning Brown's character and motives, to influence the governor in his favor. Thoreau is the man to write, or Emerson. But there seems little or no hope of pleas for mercy. Slavery must have its way and Wise must do its bidding on peril of his own safety.

*Nov. 28.* Evening at the Town Hall, a meeting being called there to make arrangements for



celebrating by appropriate services the day of Captain Brown's execution. Simon Brown, Dr. Bartlett, Keyes, Emerson and Thoreau addressed the meeting; and Emerson, Thoreau, Brown and Keyes are chosen a committee to prepare the service proper for the occasion. Sanborn is present also. Thoreau has taken a prominent part in the movement and chiefly arranged for it.

*Nov. 30.* See Thoreau again, and Emerson, concerning the Brown services on Friday, Dec. 2. We do not intend to have any speeches made on the occasion, but have selected appropriate passages from Brown's words, from the poets and from the scriptures, to be read by Thoreau, Emerson and myself, chiefly. The selection and arrangement is our. *Dec. 1.* Again see Thoreau and Emerson. It is understood that I am to read the Martyr's Service, Thoreau the selections from the poets and Emerson those from Brown's words. I copy the passages I am to read from the Wisdom of Solomon, David's Psalms and also from Plato. Sanborn has written a dirge, which will be sung, and Rev. E. H. Sears from Wayland, will offer prayer.

These arrangements were carried out in the presence of a large audience. My dirge was sung; but a more prophetic verse was indited by Mr. Sears, writing on his hymn book as the service proceeded. It was this:

Not any space six feet by two  
Will hold a man like thee;  
John Brown will tramp the shaking earth  
From Blue Ridge to the sea,  
Till the strong Angel come at last  
And open each dungeon door,  
And God's Great Charter holds and waves  
O'er all His humble poor.

Hardly had this funeral service been performed, and the body of Brown slowly made its way to its forest grave in the Adirondacs, where it is now included in the State Park of New York, when the Senate at Washington organized a special committee, headed by James M. Mason of Virginia and Jefferson Davis of Mississippi to investigate the Virginia foray, and fasten the responsi-

bility of it, if possible, on Seward, Chase, Sumner and the other leaders of the Republican party. This committee issued writs for the presence of witnesses, among them John Brown, Jr. and myself. My subpoena does not seem to have been preserved; but here is a copy of that one served on Brown's eldest son at Dorset in Ohio.

#### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Committee Room of the Select Committee of the Senate of the United States, January 20, 1860.

To John Brown, Jr. of Ashtabula County, Ohio.

Greeting:

Pursuant to the annexed resolution of the Senate of the United States, passed on the 14th of December, A. D. 1859, you are hereby commanded to appear before the Committee therein named, in their room at the capitol, in the city of Washington, on Monday, the 30th day of January next, then and there to testify what you may know relative to the subject matter embraced in the said resolution. Hereof fail not, as you will answer your default under the pains and penalties in such cases made and provided.

Given under my hand and seal, by order of the Committee, this 20th day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty.

(Signed) J. M. Mason, *Chairman of the Select Committee of the Senate of the United States.*

*Resolved*, That a committee be appointed to inquire into the facts attending the late invasion and seizure of the armory and arsenal of the United States at Harper's Ferry in Virginia, by a band of armed men. . .

And that said committee have power to send for persons and papers.

(On the reverse.)

To Dunning R. McNair, Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate of the United States:

You are hereby commanded to serve and return the within subpoena according to law.

Dated at Washington this 29th day of January in the year of our Lord 1860.

J. M. Mason, *Chairman of the Select Committee.*

Mr. McNair did not take the trouble to serve this writ, but sent it to H. Johnson, the U. S. marshal of the

Northern district of Ohio (in my case to Marshal Freeman of Sandwich, Mass.), who sent it to Mr. Brown with a letter containing this interesting assurance from Senator Mason :

If you can get an interview or other means of communication with him, he may be induced to come under the assurance you can give—that, by a late law of Congress, no person who has been summoned as a witness before a committee of Congress can afterwards be held to answer upon a criminal charge, for any fact or act done or committed by him, to which his testimony may refer. Thus should the witness have done anything in connection with the Harper's Ferry affair, which might subject him to prosecution, by testifying before the Committee he will be thenceforth exempt from prosecution.

Notwithstanding this, John Brown, Jr., refused to go to Washington for two reasons,—first, because he would be liable to seizure in passing through Virginia or Maryland; and next because he would not testify against others at the price of his own exemption. I received no such previous assurance from Mason, but when I offered to testify in Massachusetts, through fear of lack of protection in Washington, Mason assured me that he would be personally responsible for my safety. I was not so much concerned for that as resolved never to testify before slaveholders in regard to my friends.

Senator Mason refused my proposal to testify in Massachusetts, as I supposed he would, and I then wrote him that under no conditions would I appear before his committee, but throw myself on my rights as a citizen of Massachusetts, reminding him also that I could hardly rely on his offer of protection, since my friend, Senator Sumner, had been brutally assaulted a few months earlier, in the senate chamber it-

self. He then reported me in contempt of the authority of the senate, which, in February (the 16th), voted my arrest. I retired for a few weeks from general observation, until I had drawn up and forwarded my formal protest against the illegal action of the senate, sending two copies of it to Washington,—one to the vice-president, Breckenridge of Kentucky, and the other to the New Hampshire senator, J. P. Hale.

During my absence from Concord I visited the family of John Brown in North Elba, N. Y., and arranged that his daughters, Anne and Sarah, should come to Concord and enter my school as pupils.

Returning home I visited Boston and my native town in New Hampshire, where I gave a public lecture, and some time in March took up my daily business as head master of the Concord school. After so long an interval and so many opportunities for my arrest, which I was now quite ready for, I naturally concluded that the officers of the senate had given up any purpose they might have had to carry me to Washington, and dismissed the matter from my mind. My neighbors and friends, however, were solicitous about it, and I was once or twice notified from Boston that I might be visited by the officers. In the meantime John Brown, Jr., had successfully defied arrest in Ohio; James Redpath had done the same and neither was molested.

On the night of April 3, 1860, I had been out making calls in the village of Concord, returning to my house on Sudbury Street, about 9 o'clock, and was sitting quietly in my study up stairs when the door-

bell rang. The one servant, Julia Leary, had gone to bed. My sister Sarah, who was then my house-keeper, was in her chamber, and, without anticipating any harm, I went down stairs into the front hall and answered the bell myself. A young man presented himself and handed me a note, which I stepped back to read by the light of the hall lamp. It said that the bearer was a person deserving charity, and I am satisfied that he was so before he got away from Concord that night. When I looked up from reading the note four more men had entered my hall, and one of them, Silas Carleton by name (a Boston tipstaff, as I afterwards learned), came forward and laid his hand on me, saying, "I arrest you."

I said, "By what authority? If you have a warrant read it, for I shall not go with you unless you show your warrant."

Carleton, or the youth who had begged my charity, then began to read the order of the senate for my arrest. But my sister, who had feared, as I did not, what this visit meant, now rushed down the stairs, opened the other door of the hall and began to alarm the neighbors. Seeing that they were likely to be interrupted in their mission, my five callers then folded up their warrant, slipped a pair of handcuffs on my wrists before I suspected what they were doing, and tried to force me from the house.

I was young and strong and resented this indignity. They had to raise me from the floor and began to carry me (four of them) to the door where my sister stood, raising a constant alarm. My hands were pow-

erless, but as they approached the door I braced my feet against the posts and delayed them. I did the same at the posts of the veranda and it was some minutes before they got me on the gravel walk at the foot of my stone steps. Meanwhile, the church bells were ringing a fire alarm, and the people were gathering by tens. At the stone posts of the gateway I checked their progress once more, and again, when the four rascals lifted me to insert me, feet foremost, in their carriage (a covered hack with a driver on the box), I braced myself against the sides of the carriage door and broke them in. By this time it was revealed to them that my unfettered feet were making all this trouble, and one of the four, named Tarleton, wearing a long black beard, grasped my feet and brought them together, so that I could no longer use them in resistance. They had got me into their hack as far as my knees, when my sister, darting forward, grasped the long beard of my footman and pulled with so much force that the pain of it compelled him to lose his grasp, and my feet felt the ground again, outside of the carriage.

Now while all this was going on a great crowd had collected, among them old Colonel Whiting, with his daughter Anne, and his stout cane, with which he began to beat the horses, while Miss Whiting climbed to the box beside the driver, and assured him that she was going as far as he and his horses went. They began to start at the repeated strokes of the good colonel's cane, and my bearers were left a rod or two behind the hack into which they had not been able to force me. They saw at

once that their kidnapping game was defeated, but they still held me, hatless and in my evening slippers, in the street in front of my house.

At that moment, my counsel, J. S. Keyes, appeared by my side, asking me if I petitioned for a writ of habeas corpus. "By all means," said I, and he hurried off to the house of Judge Hoar, some 20 rods away.

The judge, hearing the tumult, and suspecting what it was, went to his library and began filling out the proper blank for the great writ of personal replevin. In less than 10 minutes after my verbal petition the writ was in the hands of the stalwart deputy sheriff, John Moore, who at once made the formal demand on my captors to surrender their prisoner. Stupidly, as they had acted all along, they refused.

The sheriff then called on the 150 men and women present to act as his *posse comitatus*, which some 20 of the men gladly did, and I was forcibly snatched from senatorial custody. At the same time my Irish neighbors rushed upon them and forced them to take to their broken carriage, and make off towards Lexington, the way they had driven up in the early evening. They were pursued by 20 or 30 of my townsmen, some of them as far as Lexington; but got away with no very serious bruises.

I was committed to the custody of Capt. George L. Prescott (in the Civil War, Colonel Prescott, killed at Petersburg) and spent the night in his house not far from the Old Manse, armed, for my better defense, with a six-shooter, which Mr. Bull, the inventor of the Concord grape (then chairman of the selectmen), insisted I should take. I slept

peacefully all the rest of that night, from about 11 o'clock, when the fray ended.

In the morning I was taken to Boston by Sheriff Moore and carried to the old court house, near the present City Hall, where the justices of the Supreme Court were holding a law term. My counsel, who volunteered for the case, were John A. Andrew, soon afterwards governor; Samuel Sewall, a cousin of Mrs. Alcott, and my college classmate, Robert Treat Paine. The case was argued by Andrew and Sewall in my behalf, and by C. L. Woodbury, son of the distinguished Justice Levi Woodbury of New Hampshire, who had been dead for some years, but whose son was the Democratic district attorney.

The court room was filled with my Concord and Boston friends, among them Wendell Phillips and Walt Whitman; and in the afternoon Chief Justice Shaw, the most eminent jurist in New England, delivered the following decision, setting me free:

#### OPINION OF THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT.

*F. B. Sanborn vs. Silas Carleton.*

SHAW, C. J. This arrest was made by Silas Carleton, a citizen and inhabitant of Massachusetts; and in his answer under oath, he shows a warrant to Dunning R. McNair, sergeant-at-arms of the Senate of the United States, and says that the sergeant-at-arms entered an order upon it, delegating the power to Carleton to make the arrest. There is therefore no conflict in this case between the authority of an executive officer of the United States and an officer of this Commonwealth.

It appears by the answer of the officer, which stands as part of the return to the writ of *habeas corpus*, that Carleton claims to have arrested Sanborn under a warrant purporting to have been issued under the hand and seal of the vice-president of the United States and president of

the Senate. It recites the appointment of a committee of the Senate to inquire into the circumstances of the attack made by a body of men upon the arsenal of the United States at Harper's Ferry; the citation of Sanborn to answer as a witness before such committee; that he refused to attend according to such summons; that he was thereby guilty of a contempt; and directing Dunning R. McNair, sergeant-at-arms of the Senate, to arrest the said Sanborn, wherever he could find him, and bring him before the

of the legislative and executive departments of the United States government; and the modes in which they are to be exercised, and the limits by which they are qualified.

It is admitted in the arguments that there is no express provision in the Constitution of the United States, giving this authority in terms; but it is maintained that it is necessarily incidental to various authorities vested in the Senate of the United States, in its legislative, executive and judicial functions, and must therefore be held to be conferred by necessary implication.

These questions manifestly requiring great deliberation and research in order to come to a satisfactory conclusion, and some preliminary questions having been suggested by the petitioner's counsel, it was proposed, and not objected to by the learned district attorney and assistant district attorney of the United States, by whom the court were attended in behalf of the respondent, to consider these preliminary questions first; because, if the objections, on the face of them, were sustained, it would supersede the necessity of discussing the other questions arising in the case. These points have been argued.

For obvious reasons, we lay out of this inquiry the case of the Senate, when acting in their judicial capacity, on the trial of an impeachment laid before them by the House of Representatives; and we suppose the same considerations would apply to the case of the House of Representatives in summoning witnesses to testify before them, as the grand inquest of the United States, with a view to an impeachment.

Then the objections taken to this warrant, as apparent on the face of it, as rendering it insufficient to justify the arrest of the petitioner, are three:

1. That the sergeant-at-arms, in his capacity as an officer of the Senate, had no authority to execute process out of the limits of the District of Columbia, over which the United States have, by the Constitution, exclusive jurisdiction.

2. That a sergeant-at-arms is not an officer known to the Constitution or laws of the United States, as a general executive, of known powers, like a sheriff or marshal; that he is appointed and recognized by the rules of the Senate as an officer exercising powers regulated by the rules and orders of the Senate, and can only exercise such powers as are conferred on him by such general rules and orders, made with a view to the regular proceedings of the Senate; or such as may be conferred by the Senate by special resolves and acts, as a single department of the government, without the concurrence of the other members of the government.



Chief Justice Shaw

*From a sketch by W. M. Hunt. Taken about 1858.*

Senate to answer for such contempt. This warrant seems to have been issued on the 16th of February last. There is an indorsement of the same date, by the sergeant-at-arms, authorizing and empowering the said Carleton, the respondent, to make such arrest; and the respondent justifies the arrest made on the 3d April, instant, under that process. The question is whether this arrest is justified by this return.

This question is a very broad and a very important one, and opens many interesting questions as to the functions and powers of the United States Senate, as a constituent part both

3. That by the warrant returned, the power to arrest the respondent was in terms limited to McNair, the sergeant-at-arms, and could not be executed by a deputy.

In regard to the first, it seems to us that the objection assumes a broader ground than it is necessary to occupy in deciding this preliminary question. We are not prepared to say that in no case can the Senate direct process to be served beyond the limits of the district, by an authority expressly given for that purpose.

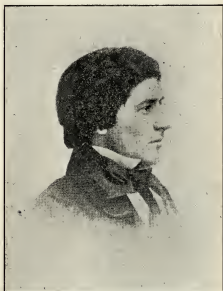
The case of *Anderson v. Dunn*, 6 Wheat. 204, cited in the argument, has little application to this question. It is manifest that that was a writ of error from the circuit court for the District of Columbia, and it appears that the alleged contempt of Anderson, in offering a bribe to a member of the House of Representatives, was committed in the District of Columbia, the act complained of as the trespass was done therein, and the process in question was served therein. In that case the process was served by the sergeant-at-arms in person, under an express authority given by the House of Representatives, by their resolve for that purpose, in pursuance of which the speaker's warrant was issued.

The second question appears to us far more material. The sergeant-at-arms of the Senate is an officer of that house, like their doorkeeper, appointed by them, and required by their rules and orders to exercise certain powers, mainly with a view to order and due course of proceeding. He is not a general officer, known to the law, as a sheriff, having power to appoint general deputies, or to act by special deputation in particular cases; nor like a marshal, who holds analogous powers, and possesses similar functions, under the laws of the United States, to those of sheriffs and deputies under the state laws.

But even where it appears, by the terms of the reasonable construction of a statute, conferring an authority on a sheriff, that it was intended he should execute it personally, he cannot exercise it by general deputy, and of course he cannot do it by special deputation. *Wood v. Ross*, 11 Mass. 271.

But, upon the third point, the court are all of opinion that the warrant affords no justification. Suppose that the Senate had authority, by the resolves passed by them, to cause the petitioner to be arrested and brought before them, it appears by the warrant issued for that purpose that the power was given alone to McNair, sergeant-at-arms, and there is nothing to indicate any intention on their part to have such arrest made by any other person. There is no

authority, in fact, given by this warrant to delegate the authority to any other person. It is a general rule of the common law, not founded on any judicial decision or statute provision, but so universally received as to have grown into a maxim, that a delegated authority to one does not authorize him to delegate it to another. *Delegata potestas non potest delegari*. Broom's *Maxim's* (3d ed.) 755. This grows out of the nature of the subject. A special authority is in the nature of a trust. It implies confidence in the ability, skill or discretion of the party intrusted. The author of such a power may extend it if he will, as is done in ordinary pow-



F. B. Sanborn.  
(1857)

ers of attorney, giving power to one or his substitute or substitutes to do the acts authorized. But when it is not so extended it is limited to the person named.

The counsel for the respondent asked what authority there is for limiting such warrant to the person named; it rather belongs to those who wish to justify under such delegated power, to show judicial authority for the extension.

On the special ground that this respondent had no legal authority to make the arrest, and has now no legal authority to detain the petitioner in his custody, the order of the court is that the said Sanborn be discharged from the custody of said Carleton.

I was then taken by my enthusiastic friends to East Cambridge in a carriage (to avoid rearrest in Boston), and from there returned to Concord, where a public meeting was held that evening to protest against the outrage offered to a citizen and to the town. No further effort was made to arrest me, the time and manner of my seizure having put the public opinion of Massachusetts wholly on my side. Citizens of Boston presented my sister with a handsome revolver in recognition of her tact and courage. The next September I had the satisfaction of helping to nominate Mr. Andrew for governor of Massachusetts in the Worcester Convention, to which I was sent as a Concord delegate. We elected and reelected him, and three years later he appointed me secretary of the Board of State Charities, a new and important office.

This year, 1860, was the last of Judge Shaw's life, and he had no opportunity, even had he wished it, to modify this decision. It agreed with the sentiments of two thirds of the people of Massachusetts, and made me popular in quarters where I was not known before. The Democratic marshal of New Hampshire, a distant cousin of mine, sent me word that, if I chose to visit my native state, he should not be able to find me, in case a second warrant for my arrest should issue. But I had no occasion to accept his suggestion, being from that time forward as safe from arrest as the marshals themselves. Indeed, I brought suit against the five kidnappers who visited Concord, and also had them indicted at the next term of the Middlesex County court for the criminal offence of kidnapping, which had been carefully defined in our

laws. But the Civil War coming on, early in 1861, and several of my kidnappers, with their council (General B. F. Butler), having volunteered or gone to the front, I withdrew my suit, and requested the district attorney to *not pros.* the indictment.

By this time, June, 1861, there was a strong reaction in the ranks of the Republican politicians in favor of Brown and his cause. At first, in the few weeks before the fall elections of 1859, there was much anxiety and trepidation among these leaders. The *New York Herald* and the pro-slavery Democratic committees charged Seward, Greeley, Giddings and other Republicans of prominence with having known and approved Brown's plans in advance, and the *Herald* in October, 1859, went so far as to say:

We have ascertained one curious fact which must not be overlooked. The outbreak was expected to have taken place several months ago; and in that expectation W. H. Seward went to Europe and Horace Greeley expected to have done so, but afterwards changed his destination to the Pacific coast. After Brown and his unfortunate comrades shall have been disposed of, the turn of Seward and the other Republican senators and members of congress will come. If they be not impeached and condemned, then neither should a hair of John Brown's head suffer, for he is really less guilty than they.

Charles Sumner was also in Europe when Brown's attack was made, but his movements and those of Seward had nothing to do with Brown's foray. Henry Wilson, however, Sumner's colleague in the Senate, a very impressible statesman, who needed the steady touch of Sumner to hold him to his task, was much concerned at these attacks, which did not spare him. At a campaign rally in New York City, just before the election of 1859, he undertook to re-

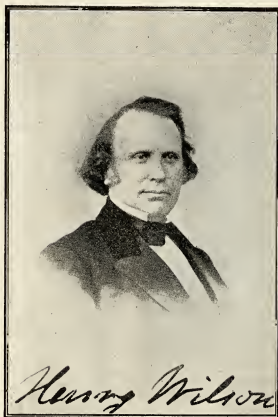


ply to the *Herald* and other pro-slavery slanderers thus:

At present, after other states have spoken, New Jersey, Wisconsin and Massachusetts,—and spoken gloriously,—an effort is being made, a poor, miserable, abortive, futile effort, to assail the cause of Republican liberty in New York by charging the responsibility of an insane

ing to the slave oligarchy which Brown had given them, as he lay wounded on the armory floor at Harper's Ferry, supposed to be dying. Mr. Cleveland said:

The Southern party—they are not a Democratic party—want to govern the whole Union



old man's act at Harper's Ferry upon the 275,000 liberty-loving, patriotic Union-saving men of this state.

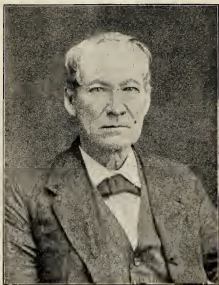
He was going on to deprecate this, and to charge the pro-slavery Democrats with being really responsible for the anti-slavery agitation, when an attack of vertigo cut his speech short. Governor Cleveland of Connecticut then took up the same thought, and exaggerated the warn-

and every state in it, and to extend slavery all over it. I pray them, and every man should pray them, to desist from their insane policy. We advise them to concert with their Northern brethren some plan for the full emancipation of their slaves, and not continue to strive for the reopening of the Africa slave-trade. With such new slaves, who would be imported by thousands, they want to take the free soil of our land and give it over to African cultivators. When that has been long going on, we do not want, hereafter, to see some other John Brown breaking up this entire Union, and scattering woe and desolation North as well as South.

This was a more reasonable alternative than most men in that excited time contemplated; but there was great exaggeration in it. What Brown contemplated was such a demonstration as would compel North and South to face the real issue of slavery's existence in a democracy, and settle the question once for all. His active efforts to retaliate on Missouri, meant the same thing; the Missouri plan and the Virginia plan were at heart the same, their object being to make slaveholding unsafe, and to give the slave a chance to fight for his freedom under rigid discipline, and not in the wild tumult of an insurrection. This very policy of Brown's was adopted in 1861 by General Fremont, in 1862 by Abraham Lincoln, and in 1863-'64 by Secretary Stanton, after pressure from Governor Andrew and other earnest men in all parts of the North. It was this that finally overcame the Rebellion, and put an end to the long Civil War. John Brown led the way in this policy, and the great heart of the people, wiser in its impulses than the statesmen in their councils, early responded to the appeal that Brown had made. Nothing else made the name and fate of Brown the watchword and rallying song of our armies. Hardly had the Civil War begun in good earnest, when a regiment of Massachusetts soldiers, with a son of Daniel Webster at their head, came marching up State Street (where, ten years before, fugitive slaves were dragged back to slavery under Webster's Fugitive Slave Bill), singing, for the first time in the presence of an audience, the famous "John Brown Song;" and it was soon heard from the lips of myriads wherever the Union armies

were encamped or marching. Its sentiment inspired the North and encouraged Lincoln to abolish slavery by proclamation, but little more than three years after Brown's death at Charlestown.

I visited the scene of his imprisonment and execution, in the spring of 1875, and met his honorable jailer, John Avis, whose later portrait is here given. He had been a captain in the Confederate army under Lee, and had ceased to be prison-keeper; but was the same composed, friendly man that Brown had found him, in the six weeks he lived in that prison. So much was Brown affected by his kindness that when a rescue was pro-



John Avis.

*Jailer of John Brown. Taken about 1850.*

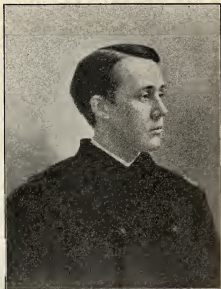
posed to him by friends at the North, he refused to consider it; saying that it would not be fair to Captain Avis to attempt aught of the kind.

Not until 1882 did I visit Kansas and examine the scene of Brown's

deeds there. I found his name associated in the popular tradition with many acts he could hardly have performed,—a sure sign that tradition and myth were doing their work, as always after a hero has appeared. I lingered longest around Osawatomie, near which prairie town Brown and his sons had dwelt on their farms, and where the first of his sons was killed in the conflict which cost his own life and that of three of his children. A mile or so northwest of the village was the log-cabin of Rev. S. L. Adair, who had married a half sister of Brown, and had built the cabin before the Kansas troubles began. No one spot in Kansas was more often visited by the hero than this; and his sons, John, Owen, Jason and Salmon, were also often there. The funeral of his son Frederick was held in the great living room of this cabin.—his mangled body having been brought in there from the high prairie farther west, where he was shot by the invading Missourians. I took tea with Mr. Adair and his daughters, and inquired particularly about the flourishing white pine tree that was seen near the cabin. Mr. Adair told me that when he last visited his native New York, in the pine-growing region, he had taken up two young pines and brought them to shade a part of his dooryard,—and these large trees were the result. They seemed to flourish as well in the rich limestone soil of the high prairie as in the rocky hills of northern New York.

Among the many who congratulated me on my successful resistance to the arrogance of the pro-slavery majority in the senate, was my college classmate, Francis Channing

Barlow, with whom I had kept up a correspondence since we graduated in 1855,—he in New York City, practising law, and I in Concord, teaching Greek and Latin, which we had read together in Cambridge. Re-



Gen. F. C. Barlow.

cently I have acquired, through the kindness of another classmate, Gen. S. C. Lawrence of Medford, a rare portrait of General Barlow; in his uniform, as he fought and was wounded at Gettysburg. It may fitly adorn this warlike chapter.

"I shall not be forward to think him mistaken in his method," said Thoreau, "who quickest succeeds to liberate the slave." Can any method be found that could have done that work quicker than Brown's? Within six years from his execution there was not a slave held in bondage in the United States; but for Brown's career it might have been sixty years before we reached that result. His attack and its consequences showed

both North and South the gulf on whose brink they were standing; the infuriated slave-masters made haste to break up the Union, which they saw might ultimately destroy their system. Put thus to the test, our millions of the North were not slow to say, "We choose union without slavery, even at the cost of indefinite bloodshed, to any further union with slave-masters and traitors." The mobs of our cities, which, in January, 1861, were howling against the abolitionists, six months later were dangerous to compromisers that counseled peace with dishonor. The ancient belief that in battle that army must win in whose vanguard the first victim devoted himself to death, was once more justified. Led on by a foreordination he felt but did not understand, Brown gave his life for the cause destined to succeed. Unlike that French marshal who "spent a long life carrying aid to the stronger side," Brown lent his good sword to that which seemed the weaker, but which had God for its reserve.

Standing on the battlefield of Gettysburg less than four years after Brown's public murder (November 19, 1863), Lincoln pronounced the funeral oration, more eloquent than Pericles, of those who "gave their lives that the nation might live." Not many months later Lincoln himself fell,—the last great victim in the cause of which Brown was the first great martyr. But the brave men commemorated at Gettysburg went forth to battle at the call of a grand people; they were sustained by the resources and the ardor of millions. I must still recall the sacrifice of my old friend,—lonely, poor, persecuted, making a stand on the outpost of Freedom,—our own guns trained upon him, as the furious enemy swept him to death in the storm of their vengeance; and now I see that History cannot forget him, but exalts him among the liberators of mankind, who sealed the testament of their benefactions with the blood of noble hearts.

Pitied by gentle hearts Kilmarnock died;  
The brave, Balmerino! were on thy side.